18ᵀᴴ eHEALTH NETWORK, 12-13 NOVEMBER 2020, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

COVER NOTE

6.2   Reflection on eHealth Network effectiveness and cooperation in light of recent developments

1.   Issue at stake

Invite the eHealth Network members and the Commission to an open discussion/exchange of views on the future governance, workplan and sustainability of the eHealth Network, in the light of future legislative initiative of the Commission on European Health Data Space, recent developments and with the goal to increase the effectiveness and impact of digital health policies at EU level.

2.   Summary

With a rapid and necessary response to the European interoperability need for contact tracing/exposure notification applications, the eHealth Network, with strong support and steer from the Commission has proven its relevance in interoperability matters and eHealth cooperation more than ever. The need for interoperability in the Member States evolves as the digital health ecosystem evolves and matures vis-à-vis with sharing of experiences and best practices among the Member States. Especially in times of disruption as in the current pandemic, where certain digital health developments slowed to a halt and others accelerated, it is good to reflect on these changes and how it can and should affect the future governance and workplan of the eHealth Network.

The eHealth Network has progressed far within the constraints and boundaries of the voluntary collaboration. Its decisions are not mandatory and are not enshrined in any laws. There is a need to discuss what could be done in order to advance our structures and to increase the impact of the eHealth Network in Member States towards a sustainable digital ecosystem in healthcare sector. Building on the momentum within our Member States, within the European collaboration on COVID-19 interoperability and the momentum in digital health in Europe and beyond. It is important to reflect on whether the eHealth Network is still meeting the needs of the Member States and fulfils its mandate to improve cross-border interoperability sufficiently. This reflection will also feed into the better regulation work of the Commission on 2021 legislative proposal for European Health Data Space.

Key topics are:

- How member states can advance and accelerate the national eHealth adoption, eHealth capacity building, and implementation of new use cases for cross-border exchange, based on current and actual interoperability needs.
- How does the new cooperation on mobile contact tracing fit here and eHealth Network members see the relationship towards the cooperation? Given that the apps are epidemiological tools, how to organise the transfer to ECDC and allow them to be used for future pandemics?

- How does the eHealth Network see the current set up of sub-working groups, our infrastructure governance and how can the impact of these working groups be further enhanced. Do we need more commitment by the Member States?
- How do we integrate more our National eHealth Competence Centres and National Digital Health Networks in the European eHealth network cooperation?
- What are the lessons learned from the past 2 years of eHealth Network work/activities done and governance, what has worked and what has not worked well.
- What is the expected core future outputs/outcomes of eHealth Network?
- Should one foresee more legal weight of the acts of the eHealth Network (eg implementing/delegated acts on minimum datasets, on standards and specifications
- How can we increase the political relevance of eHealth Network towards a long-term sustainability of the European digital health ecosystem, in line with the expectation on the primary and secondary use of health data.
- Next steps in this discussion: how do we take this discussion further, are there concrete steps we can make, what opportunities are there.

3.   Format of procedure in the meeting

For information